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THE EPIGRAPHIC FINDS FROM THE ROMAN TEMPLE AT KEDESH IN THE UPPER GALILEE

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Four Greek inscriptions have been discovered to date in the Roman temple complex at Kedesh (Tel Qedesh) in the Upper Galilee.[1] Two came to light during the last century, while an additional two were discovered in the course of the archaeological excavations of 1981 (Ovadiah a.o. 1982; Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1984; Ovadiah, Fischer and Roll 1985). The first two inscriptions were reviewed by the authors in the preliminary report on the excavations (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1984:166–167) which dealt with the architecture and identification of the deity of the temple. In the present article, the epigraphic and chronological aspects are discussed. Since inscription 3 has been fully published (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1982), only its principal aspects are presented here.

Inscription 1

This inscription, carved on an altar, was found by Wilson in 1865 not far from the temple (as cited in *SWP* 1:229). In Wilson's field sketch the obverse of the altar showed a draped, bearded head, radiate, topped with a five-letter Greek word, CWMOC, of unclear significance, or possibly (B)WMOC, according to Clermont-Ganneau (1903a). Basing himself on this reading, Clermont-Ganneau assumed that the name of some deity in the genitive case would appear on the base of the altar beneath the head. However, closer inspection of the obverse did not reveal any traces of additional letters. The reverse side of the altar bore two stylised trees flanking a 13-line Greek inscription with an average of four to six letters in each line.

The reading suggested by Clermont-Ganneau is as follows:

θεῷ ἁγίῳ... Σεπτίμιος Ζήνω(ν) Ζωσίμου (ἀ)νέθηκ(ε)ν, IVE′? μη(νός) Ἀ(ρ)τεμισίου ηι′.

To the holy god... Septimios Zenon son of Zosimos dedicated in the year... on the eighteenth of the month of Artemisios.

Dating of the inscription is problematic. Clermont-Ganneau (1903a:133) regarded the construction IVE′ as a date and suggested that these letters be read (L)YE = λ.υε′, yielding "the year 405," which according to the Tyrian era (beginning in 126/5 B.C.E.) is the equivalent of 279/80 C.E. (For the Tyrian era, see Clermont-Ganneau 1903b; Rey-Coquais 1977:134). Historical sources do indeed relate that Kedesh was within the Tyrian sphere: "Κάδασα(τῶν) Τυρίων" (*Jos. Wars* II, 459). An alternative suggestion made by Clermont-Ganneau (1903a:134) results in IV′ = 410 for this group of letters, again

1 This topic was discussed in a lecture by Prof. Asher Ovadiah during the conference "Greece and Rome in Eretz-Israel" held at the Universities of Haifa and Tel Aviv on March 25–28, 1985 under the auspices of the Centers for the Study of Eretz-Israel and its Yishuv of Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, at the University of Haifa and Tel Aviv University.

according to the Tyrian era, indicating 284/5 C.E. On the other hand, he proposed that ε be regarded as an abbreviation of the word ἔτους. Artemisios, the eighth month in the Macedonian calendar, falls between May 19 and June 18, thus giving a date of June 5, 279/80 or 284/5 C.E. for our inscription.

Although both of the dates proposed by Clermont-Ganneau are quite plausible, the epigraphic evidence is too scanty to afford any degree of certainty. The three names mentioned in the inscription — Septimios, Zenon and Zosimos — are common in the Graeco-Roman onomastikon (Pape and Benseler 1911:445, *s.v.* Ζήνων; 449–450, *s.v.* Ζώσιμος; 1370, *s.v.* Σεπτίμιος; Preisigke 1922:118, *s.v.* Ζήνων; 119–120, *s.v.* Ζώσιμος; 379, *s.v.* Σεπτίμιος).

Inscription 2

This inscription, consisting of seven lines with an average of 15 letters in each, was found built into the outer wall of the nearby police station, now defunct. It was published by McCown (1923) and properly published by Moutèrde (1923; 1925:355, n. 4). It reads as follows:

> [Ἔτους] γμσ'. Θεοῦ ἁγίου οὐρανίου συνγέν(ε)ια (*sic!*) 'εποίησεν, διὰ 'επιμελητῶν 'Αννίου Ναγδᾶ καὶ Λισέμσεος Δάματος εὐχήν.
>
> [In the year] 243 the *Syngeneia* of the holy god of the sky did (this) in fulfillment of a vow under the supervision of Annios (son of) Nagda and Lisemseos (son of) Damas.

Moutèrde (*loc. cit.*) proposed that 243 is according to the Tyrian era, i.e. 117/8 C.E. and that "the holy god of the sky" refers to Baalshamin (Cumont 1929:118 ff.; Teixidor 1977:26 ff.; Seyrig 1933:246–252; 1949; Sourdel 1952:19–31).

It is quite probable that both of the above inscriptions orginally belonged to the temple at Kedesh and bear witness to the Baalshamin cult. The word συνγέν(ε)ια has a religious, social and organizational connotation and in this instance expresses the relationship between the worshippers and the deity (des Places 1964:154–179; Musti 1963).

The three names appearing in Inscription 2 — Annios, Lisemseos and Damas — sound Greek, while the fourth name, Nagda, appears to be of Semitic origin (Pape and Benseler 1911:92, *s.v.* Ἄννιος [the Roman name Annius]; 266, *s.v.* Δάμας or Δαμᾶς; Preisigke 1922:32–33, *s.v.* Ἄννιος; 83, *s.v.* Δάμας or Δαμᾶς; Wuthnow 1930: 80, *s.v.* Ναγδας; 150, *s.v.* נגדא; 43, *s.v.* Δαμας). The word εὐχήν concluding the inscription is an abbreviated formula of κατ' εὐχήν, indicating "in fulfillment of a vow," which is often encountered in inscriptions of this type (Liddell and Scott 1940:739, *s.v.* εὐχή [κατ' εὐχήν]; Kraeling 1938:376– 379, Nos. 6–8; 387, No. 24; 388–389, No. 27; 397–398, No. 50; 414–415, No. 107; 415, No. 108; Prentice 1908: Nos. 347, 358, 369, 380).

Inscription 3 (Pl. 3:1)

The third inscription was uncovered during the first season of excavations in the summer of 1981. Consisting of four lines, it is carved on an altar in a rounded Greek script (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1982). The first line, which is carved along the projec-

tion of the cornice, is clearly separated from the other three lines which appear on the body of the altar. This dedicatory inscription was found in the southern part of the temple portico. Since the altar was not completely preserved, part of the inscription is missing.

[..] Ṗ (ivy-leaf) AYPHΛḶ [.....]
ΔEKAΔAPXOC [.....]
ANEΘHKEN TṲ [.....]
ETOYC $\overline{\text{MT}}$

The first line may be completed to read: [Μά]ρ(κῳ) Αὐρηλί[ῳ]. Although some half of the cornice is missing, the line may be reconstructed with the word 'Αντωνίνῳ; thus the full name on the cornice reads: [Μά]ρ (κῳ) Αὐρηλί[ῳ 'Αντωνίνῳ].

The fact that this name was visually separated from the rest of the inscription on the body of the altar emphasises the importance of the personality to whom the altar was dedicated. This leads to the conclusion that the person concerned was the emperor Caracalla, who traced his descent from the Antonines and adopted their name. A similar case occurs in the dedicatory inscription discovered at Augusta Traiana in Bulgaria (Mihailov 1964: No. 1557, tabula 3), where Caracalla is likewise mentioned solely by the name Antoninus carved on the cornice in a position apart from the rest of the inscription.

The second line of our inscription refers to the dedicator of the altar. The reference to his position or posting seems to have been lost. His title is δεκάδαρχος, which may indicate one of three positions known from other Greek inscriptions discovered in the eastern Roman empire: 1) a civilian municipal position — member of a city council or council of some other type of settlement; 2) a position in a *collegium*, as a council member; 3) a military position, namely a cavalry officer. Δεκάδαρχος or δεκαδάρχης are identical with the Roman title *decurio*. Latin inscriptions from the eastern provinces of this period frequently include the title *decurio* with references to the positions suggested above. Unfortunately, the poor state of preservation does not permit precise identification of the dedicator's position (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1982:156–157).

The most plausible completion of the third line is ἀνέθηκεν Τύ[χης βωμόν]. The completion of the word Τύχης is indicated by the partial preservation of the letter υ. 'Ανέθηκεν Τυ [ρίων βωμόν] is less acceptable, since if this was an altar of the Tyrians, we would expect it to be larger and more impressive. This inscription cannot be regarded as proof of the existence of a Τύχη cult at Kedesh during the Roman period. It is more likely that the dedication of the altar to this goddess was on the personal initiative of the same δεκάδαρχος.

The fourth line states the year of dedication, i.e. 340: ἔτους μτ'. As in the first two inscriptions, this date is according to the Tyrian era. It may therefore be calculated that the altar was dedicated in 214/5, during the reign of Caracalla. This is also borne out by the mention of this emperor in the first line (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1982:157).

The full inscription thus reads:

[Μά]ρ (κῳ) Αὐρηλί[ῳ 'Αντωνίνῳ]
δεκάδαρχος [.....]

ἀνέθηκεν Τύ̣[χης βωμόν]
ἔτους μτ'.
To [Ma]r(cus) Aureli[us Antoninus]
decadarchos (= decurio) [.....]
dedicated the [altar] of Ty[che]
in the year 340.

Inscription 4 (Pls. 3:2; 4:1)

Found accidentally near the eastern wall of the *peribolos* after the first season of excavations, this inscription is carved on a high pedestal,[2] which, as stated in the inscription, was intended to hold a statue. Carved in a rounded script, it consists of eight lines, but only the remains of two letters of the first line are preserved and even these are illegible. The letters of the seventh and eighth lines are smaller and more closely spaced than those of the previous lines, probably due to miscalculation of the available space.[3]

[.....]
ε̣ὖς Ἀντικέρασ-
ος, Κράτηρος, Ἀ-
ήλιας, Ἀγαθοκ [λῆ]-
ς συμβίου καὶ Ἴο [.]-
[.] πτης θυγατρό[ς]
[τ]ὸν ἀνδριάντα σὺν τῇ βάσει
τῷ ειτ' ἔτει.

(Blessed be)
Antikerasos the good,
Krateros, A-
elias, Agathok[le]-
s with his wife and Io[.]-
[.]ptes his daughter
(they erected) the statue with the pedestal
in the year 315.

It may be assumed that the inscription opens with the first line, now lost, containing a formula of blessing either in honour or in memory of a number of persons and in honour or in memory of the wife and daughter of one of them (Agathokles), who erected the statue and its pedestal. The inscription does not state to whom the statue was dedicated, but the expenses for its erection were evidently footed by the persons whose names are mentioned. These are the donors, possibly all members of the same family.

2 Dimensions: height — 66 cm.; width at top — 45 cm.; maximum width (at bottom) — 52 cm.; depth — 40 cm. The base is worked on both ends, while the back is unfinished.

3 The letters of lines 2–6 are 3 cm. high while they are 1.6–2.2 cm. in lines 7–8. Average depth of letters is 1–2 mm.

Since the pedestal was found near the eastern gate of the *peribolos*, it may be assumed that it stood within the *temenos* of Kedesh. It is not unlikely that it supported a statue of some deity, perhaps Baalshamin (Ovadiah, Fischer and Roll, forthcoming); a statue of the emperor or a prominent member of the same ancestral home or family are also likely possibilities. Statues of prominent family members have been found in sacred enclosures (*temene*) at Ḥatra in Iraq (Homès-Fredericq 1963:13–14).

The proper names Ἀντικέρασος,[4] Κράτηρος and Ἀγαθοκλῆς frequently occur in the Greek onomastikon (Preisigke 1922:185, *s.v.* Κράτηρος; 5, *s.v.* Ἀγαθοκλῆς; Pape and Benseler 1911:6, *s.v.* Ἀγαθοκλῆς). In Κράτηρος the letter ε is mistakenly written phonetically as η. This name should, of course, have been spelled Κράτερος or Κρατερός (Preisigke 1922:185, *s.v.*; Pape and Benseler 1911:712, *s.v.*). Ἀήλιας is probably a corruption of Ἀ<έ>λι<ο>ς, the Greek form of the Latin name Aelius (Pape and Benseler 1911:21, *s.v.* Ἀέλιος; Kraeling 1938:413 [No. 102], 416 [No. 110], 448 [Nos. 203–204], 464 [No. 263]). In this name η appears instead of ε, as does α in place of ο, again showing that the name was spelled phonetically, albeit incorrectly. The date appearing in the eighth line, 315, is according to the Tyrian era (Clermont-Ganneau 1903b; Rey-Coquais 1977:134), yielding 189/190 C.E., the reign of Commodus.

Dating

Two of the inscriptions dealt with in this article point to Baalshamin as the deity to whom the Kedesh temple was dedicated. This is further supported by the two eagles, one carved on the soffit of the lintel of the central entrance, the other in the centre of the front of the lintel of the northern entrance. (The crescent with a star, the basin standing on a tripod and the cithara carved on one of the cornices of the portico entablature are purely ornamental and do not represent attributes or symbols of any deity (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1984:166–168; Ovadiah, Fischer and Roll, forthcoming).

Three of the inscriptions, namely Nos. 2–4, which date to 117/8, 189/90 and 214/5, serve as our point of departure for dating the complex as a whole. These dates show that the temple was in use during the second and third centuries C.E. Although Clermont-Ganneau suggested that the letters ΙΝΕ′ (Inscription 1) indicate the years 279/80 or 284/5 C.E., the dating of this inscription is still problematic. The architectural ornamentation of the complex as a whole and its similarity to others in the Syro-Phoenician region also point to the chronological framework suggested here (Fischer, Ovadiah and Roll 1984:157–166). Consequently, we may assume that the building of the temple complex at Kedesh was begun in the early second century C.E. (or possibly even earlier) and was completed in stages over an extended period of time. At present it is difficult to determine just when the temple fell into disuse, but there is evidence that it was destroyed in an earthquake, possibly that of May 19, 363 C.E. (Russell 1980; 1985:42).

4 The name Ἀντικέρασος sounds Greek, and its prefix Αντι is very common in Greek names such as Ἀντίοχος, Ἀντίπατρος, Ἀντίνοος, Ἀντίλοχος, Ἀντίμαχος, Ἀντίγονος, Ἀντιγένης, etc.

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